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ABSTRACT

The purpose of this study was to determine which states have experimental, pilot, or innovative program (EPOIP) clauses in their state licensure documents and how many of the existing clauses are being used by teacher education institutions (TEIs). These special clauses allow teacher education programs, which might significantly differ from traditional programs for teacher certification, to exist within the state and may also provide for greater local control of those programs. Study criteria for EPOIPs included differences in both delivery and content from traditional programs. Telephone and/or written surveys were used to obtain information from directors, deans, and individuals involved in the planning and implementation of EPOIPs within each state's teacher certification agency. Twenty-three states and the District of Columbia initially stated that they had EPOIPs, while 25 did not. Two states did not respond. Further phone contact revealed major variations in the definition of EPOIPs from state to state. Twenty-one states with clauses reported past or presently active EPOIPs. Almost half of the EPOIPs identified are in special needs or critical shortage areas. A very small percentage of the teaching population is being served by EPOIPs. The present system does not appear to encourage innovation in teacher certification for the typical teacher candidate. A clear definition of EPOIPs must be developed and accepted by all states to enhance the possibility that TEIs will know of and use clauses that encourage EPOIPs. Three data tables are provided. (RLC)

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# An Examination of Fifty States' Policies and Practices of Innovative, Pilot, or Experimental Programs in Teacher Education

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Introduction

In working toward a vision of excellence, recent reform movements in teacher education offer a plethora of remedies for change. Some simply suggest raising or lowering entrance requirements, while others call for complex radical restructuring.

One often mentioned curative is deregulation. Hawley (1986) argued that regulation by state agencies is cumbersome. Deregulation, however, would encourage teacher education institutions to tailor-make programs that would be most beneficial to their students as well as to the institutions themselves.

Allowing teacher education institutions greater freedom in deciding appropriate routes and program content for teacher licensure has gained noteworthy attention. Mehlinger made a convincing argument in 1987 that "regulatory systems force colleges and universities to behave as if they were all alike". Different institutions have different goals, financial structures, faculty, and students. Therefore, a uniquely designed teacher education program could focus on the institution's strengths and needs.

Certain states have tried to address this concern by instituting "experimental, pilot, or innovative" program clauses in their state licensure documents. These special clauses allow teacher education programs to exist within the state which might significantly differ from traditional programs for teacher certification and may also provide for greater local control of

those programs. The purpose of this study was to find which states have such clauses, and how many of the existing clauses are being utilized by teacher education institutions.

Method

Initial contact was made with all states' teacher certification agencies by a letter stating the purpose of the project and a request for information. Agencies identified a contact person and checked whether or not their state had experimental, pilot, or innovative programs on a return postcard. All "yes" responses were contacted for the names of past or current programs. "No" responses, as well as those states not responding, were followed up by phone for further verification.

Telephone and/or written surveys were used to gain information from directors, deans, and individuals involved in the planning, and implementation of these experimental/innovative programs. To understand the "true essence" of these kinds of programs, it seemed necessary to address some basic issues involved in developing innovations. The following items are examples of the questions asked:

-How is the experimental, innovative, pilot program unique?
-Who initiated the development of the program?
-How long has the program been in existence?
-What was the funding source of the program?
-Was the program review conducted at the same time as other certification programs?
-Do you feel the unique program was analyzed more carefully in the accreditation process than other programs?
-Did you have a review team selected that understood the program's special dimension or was specifically trained in the program's focal area?
-Did you encounter problems with certain areas?

Certification documents were also requested from each state

so that existing innovative clauses could be evaluated.

Results

As Table 1 indicates (refer to attachments), twenty-three states and the District of Columbia initially stated that they had experimental, pilot or innovative programs while twenty-five did not. Two states did not respond. Further phone contact revealed major variations in the definition of experimental/innovative programs from state to state. Alternative certification routes were often described as innovative when their only uniqueness was in delivery of the program--for example taking a briefer time to completion.

Such minor deviations did not meet our criteria for experimental/innovative programs. Our definition consisted of two parts: difference in delivery and difference in content. If there is no difference in content, the programs typically go through the same accreditation process as any other program. For example, alternative certification routes often hold candidates to the same standards and differ only in the time allowed to meet those standards. Thus, they are standard programs under the guise of innovation.

Further problems resulted because many of the contact people did not know if they had an innovative program clause; and if they did, they were sometimes unable to describe the differences in the programs from the normal programs or to identify existing programs. When it became evident that conflicting information was emerging in the data collection, teacher certification requirements and standards were requested from each state for

further assessment. Each document was examined for any mention of experimental, pilot, or innovative programs. When necessary, states were again contacted for further explanation of their documents.

Table 2 gives the breakdown of states which had written clauses in their state documents for experimental, innovative, or pilot programs. States which follow NASTDEC standards are also indicated.

Follow up by phone revealed twenty-one of the states with clauses reporting past or presently active experimental, innovative or pilot programs. Program people were surveyed by phone or mail. Tentative results reveal little variety in types of existing programs. Table 3 lists the types of programs and how many exist within each category.

Discussion

According to the Association of State Directors of Teacher Education and Certification (1981) all types of teacher certification programs may be considered innovative or experimental--from new approaches to preparation of elementary teachers to those programs which train teachers for special needs areas. Almost half of the experimental programs identified thus far are in special needs or critical shortage areas. A very small percentage of the teaching population is being served by experimental programs. The present system does not appear to encourage innovation in teacher certification for the typical teacher candidate.

As Table 3 indicates, very few programs were identified.

Program directors also cited short-lived programs. This finding appears to coincide with the nature of special needs programs. Once the need is filled, the program is no longer maintained.

Other possible reasons for short duration vary. Some programs are person-driven and collapse when the responsible individual is no longer the driving force behind the program. Experimental programs can also generate more work and stress depending on the amount of extra documentation required by the state. An additional problem for some programs is the small population they serve which can cause recruitment difficulties. The tenuous funding of such programs can also cause instability. The review process may also discourage program continuation, as indicated by some program people who believed the approval process dictated by their state was unwieldy.

These problems may not only contribute to the discontinuation of programs, but also to the discouragement of initial interest in creating of innovative or experimental program proposals. In fact, many states with clauses in their teacher certification documents for experimental/innovative programs indicated that no institutions had ever applied for such program approval.

Discontinuation of a special program was not always, however, due to a problem. As stated earlier, some programs end because the needs of a special population being served were met and there was no longer a purpose for the program. Some program directors also predicted the long range continuation of their program and saw no problem with the accreditation process in

their state.

Two newly proposed programs for elementary teachers in the midwest offer promise. One program will be designed for incoming Freshmen, who will be placed in a local elementary school for four years. Seminars and participation in the classroom will increase proportionally each year so that by the end of the fourth year the students will be fully credentialed to teach. The other program offers a three-year format for graduate students who will serve the first year as a paid intern and the next two years as resident teachers for service in induction. Although these programs appear to be quite unique and have followed the definition of experimental/innovative as set forth in this study, these programs are too new to fully evaluate.

Conclusions

Discovering the status of innovative or experimental teacher certification programs across the fifty states was difficult due to problems in articulation. Obviously, a clearly understood definition of what constitutes experimental or innovative programs must be developed and accepted by all states to enhance the possibility that teacher education institutions will know of and utilize clauses which encourage such programs when the states offer the opportunity.

Clarification may not, however, be enough to encourage submission of special teacher certification proposals. Each state must identify current practices which may inhibit program development or continuation. Teacher education institutions might be surveyed to enlist their suggestions for improvement and

explanation for inaction. Are they unaware of experimental program possibilities? Do they view the approval process for experimental programs too cumbersome? Are the present boundaries of the accreditation process flexible enough to enable ample reform? Are their present programs so effective they feel no need for change?

If teacher education is to meet the call for reform with more than a quick fix of higher entrance requirements, teacher educators must be allowed and encouraged to research the benefits of what may be complex restructuring. The results of this study do not indicate that present state policies or practices support such reform efforts.

# TABLE 1

States Reporting Experimental, Pilot, or Innovative Programs

| STATE | YES | NO | STATE | YES | NO |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ALABAMA | | ✓ | MONTANA | ✓ | |
| ALASKA | | ✓ | NEBRASKA | | ✓ |
| ARIZONA | ✓ | | NEVADA | | ✓ |
| ARKANSAS | | ✓ | NEW HAMPSHIRE | ✓ | |
| CALIFORNIA | ✓ | | NEW JERSEY | | ✓ |
| COLORADO | ✓ | | NEW MEXICO | | ✓ |
| CONNECTICUT | | ✓ | NEW YORK | | ✓ |
| DELAWARE | | ✓ | NORTH CAROLINA | ✓ | |
| DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA | | ✓ | NORTH DAKOTA | | ✓ |
| FLORIDA | ✓ | | OHIO | ✓ | |
| GEORGIA | ✓ | | OKLAHOMA | ✓ | |
| HAWAII | ✓ | | OREGON | ✓ | |
| IDAHO | ✓ | | PENNSYLVANIA | ✓ | |
| ILLINOIS | | ✓ | RHODE ISLAND | ✓ | |
| INDIANA | ✓ | | SOUTH CAROLINA | | ✓ |
| IOWA | | ✓ | SOUTH DAKOTA | ✓ | |
| KANSAS | | ✓ | TENNESSEE | ✓ | |
| KENTUCKY | ✓ | | TEXAS | ✓ | |
| LOUISIANA | | ✓ | UTAH | | ✓ |
| MAINE | | ✓ | VERMONT | | ✓ |
| MARYLAND | | ✓ | VIRGINIA | | ✓ |
| MASSACHUSETTS | | ✓ | WASHINGTON | ✓ | ✓ |
| MICHIGAN | ✓ | | WEST VIRGINIA | | ✓ |
| MINNESOTA | ✓ | | WISCONSIN | ✓ | |
| MISSISSIPPI | ✓ | | WYOMING | ✓ | |
| MISSOURI | | ✓ | | | |

# TABLE 2

Special Program Clauses as Identified Within State Documents

| | Experimental | Innovative | NASTDEC | Experimental & Innovative | No Clause | Pilot Program |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| ALABAMA | | | | ✓ | | |
| ALASKA | | | ✓ | | | |
| ARIZONA | | | | | ✓ | |
| ARKANSAS | | | | | ✓ | |
| CALIFORNIA | ✓ | | | | | |
| COLORADO | | | | | | ✓ |
| CONNECTICUT | | | | | ✓ | |
| DELAWARE | | | ✓ | | | |
| DISTRICT OF COLUMBIA | | | | | ✓ | |
| FLORIDA | | | | | ✓ | |
| GEORGIA | | | | | ✓ | |
| HAWAII | | | ✓ | | | |
| IDAHO | | | | | ✓ | |
| ILLINOIS | | | | | ✓ | |
| INDIANA | ✓ | | | | | |
| IOWA | | | | | ✓ | |
| KANSAS | | | | ✓ | | |
| KENTUCKY | ✓ | | | | | |
| LOUISIANA | | | | | ✓ | |
| MAINE | | | | | ✓ | |
| MARYLAND | | | | | ✓ | |
| MASSACHUSETTS | | | | | ✓ | |
| MICHIGAN | ✓ | | | | | |
| MINNESOTA | ✓ | | | | | |
| MISSISSIPPI | | | | | ✓ | |
| MISSOURI | | | | | ✓ | |
| MONTANA | | | | ✓ | | |
| NEBRASKA | | | | | ✓ | |
| NEVADA | | | | | ✓ | |
| NEW HAMPSHIRE | | | | ✓ | | |
| NEW JERSEY | | | ✓ | | | |
| NEW MEXICO | | | | | ✓ | |
| NEW YORK | | | | | ✓ | |
| NORTH CAROLINA | | | | | ✓ | |
| NORTH DAKOTA | | | | | ✓ | |
| OHIO | | ✓ | | | | |
| OKLAHOMA | | | | | ✓ | |
| OREGON | ✓ | | | | | |
| PENNSYLVANIA | ✓ | | | | | |
| RHODE ISLAND | | | ✓ | | | |
| SOUTH CAROLINA | | | | ✓ | | |
| SOUTH DAKOTA | | | | ✓ | | |
| TENNESSEE | | | | | ✓ | |
| TEXAS | | | | | | ✓ |
| UTAH | | | | | ✓ | |
| VERMONT | | | | | ✓ | |
| VIRGINIA | | | | | ✓ | |
| WASHINGTON | | | | | ✓ | |
| WEST VIRGINIA | | | | | ✓ | |
| WISCONSIN | | | | ✓ | | |
| WYOMING | | | | ✓ | | |

# TABLE 3

Types of Programs

## UNDERGRADUATE PROGRAMS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Secondary Math Certification | 1 |
| 2. | Elementary and Secondary Certification - Urban Education | 2 |
| 3. | Elementary Certification | 2 |
| 4. | Elementary and Second Language Certification | 1 |
| 5. | Secondary Certification | 2 |
| 6. | Special Education | 1 |

## POST BACC PROGRAMS

| | | |
|---|---|---|
| 1. | Elementary Certification | 2 |
| 2. | Elementary Certification - Urban Education | 2 |
| 3. | Elementary and Secondary Certification | 2 |
| 4. | Secondary Certification | 2 |
| 5. | Secondary Math Certification | 2 |

## References

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